



Sen. Joyce Mulliken's UPDATE FROM OLYMPIA 1/16/04

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Committee Assignments

Land Use & Planning (Chair)
Highways & Transportation
Commerce & Trade

IMPORTANT DATES:

Monday, Jan. 19

1:30 pm – The Senate
Parks, Fish & Wildlife
Committee: public hearing
on **SB 6118** which allows
for cougar control pilot
programs.

4:30 pm – Senate Land Use
& Planning Committee:
work session on Review of
Final Shoreline Rules and a
public hearing on **SB 6197**
which provides a tax
exemption for property that
has declined in value due
to shoreline or GMA
regulations.

Tuesday, Jan. 20

8:30 am – Senate
Agriculture Committee:
public hearing on **SB 6127**,
promoting WA state
agriculture; **SB 6107**,
preventing the spread of
animal diseases; and **SB**
6109, establishing a system
of animal identification.

Dear Friends,

I want to take a moment to let you know about some of the issues I'll be working on as Chair of the Senate's Land Use and Planning Committee.

I anticipate a great deal of continued debate centered on the Growth Management Act. The power of the hearings boards and the liability that local governments face just by opening up their development plans are two very important issues that my committee will discuss.

Addressing the "Best Available Science" standard will also be a priority. In 1995, the GMA was amended to direct cities and counties to include the "best available science" in developing policies and regulations to protect the functions and values of critical areas. This standard has proven to be ambiguous and costly for local governments to adhere to.

Last session, the Senate passed SSB 5658 which declared that the "best available science" should be procedural, not substantive, and that local governments are not required to use a particular approach. While the bill died in the House, the fight for this legislation is not over. We have over 300 jurisdictions that are going to have to update their critical area ordinance plans with an unclear and ambiguous "best available science" rule.

Another issue of concern is GMA planning for low-density counties. Counties that are required to plan under the GMA, and the cities located within those counties must review and revise their comprehensive land use plans and develop regulations according to specified time periods. Currently, growth rates drive the GMA requirements. For small, rural counties, it makes more sense to use population density per square mile as the driver. This yard stick better meets the goals of the GMA such as economic development, affordable housing and traffic mitigation.

We'll also be looking at limiting the power of the Growth Management Hearings Boards. Too many times, these hearings boards make decisions based on ambiguous definitions. Currently, they have the ability to "invalidate" a local comprehensive plan the cities, counties and citizens have adopted even after compromises are reached.

I also want to let you know of my new involvement with the Senate Natural Resources, Energy and Water Committee. While not an official voting member of the committee, I have asked to be an "ex-officio" member so I can attend all meetings and offer my input on legislation. Because of my attendance in the committee and my inclusion in these matters, farmers, businesses owners and voters in the 13th district will now have a greater voice when it comes to water, energy, renewable energy, RMAP, and forestry issues.

Sen. Joyce Mulliken, 13th Legislative District

"As Chair of the Senate's Land Use and Planning Committee, my goal is to reduce the burden of land use regulations and other roadblocks to affordable housing and to free private property owners from onerous, repetitive and cumbersome rules. I am committed to a land use approach that protects our environment, our natural resources and our economic recovery." – Sen. Joyce Mulliken